

Owen and Crighton theatres deliver Christmas treats

By Peggie Miller

Performing arts columnist

No doubt about it, Christmas is coming, and like the geese in that old English folk song, the entertainment choices are growing.

(Actually, the song says "the geese are getting fat," but we won't go there.)

The local arts scene has a bag full of goodies to distribute, something for every holiday taste. Because the dates are staggered it's possible to sample them all.

Two of the biggest plums in the mix are stage productions by the CRIGHTON PLAYERS at the Owen Theatre and STAGE RIGHT at the Crighton Theatre. Both plays are reprises; one the classic Dickens' tale of Scrooge and company, "A Christmas Carol" at the Owen. The other is Stage Right's redo of the Jones, Hope, and Wooten comedy "Christmas Belles," first presented in 2008 at SR'S home base, the Crighton Theatre.

Stage Right continues its "Season of Southern Comfort" at the Crighton Theatre with Frankie, Twink and Honey Raye Futtrelle, best known residents of fictional Fayro, Texas.

This PG-rated comedy investigates the annual Fayro Christmas program where a power struggle is in progress, with the ousted director of 27 previous pageants resorting to any means necessary to regain her prominence.

Santa Claus, the celebrity guest, is suffering rather humiliating health problems, and one of the shepherds insists on pulling his little red wagon everywhere he goes, even if he has to abandon watching over his flock by night.

The Band Boosters provided more than pancakes at their annual supper, leaving most of the pageant cast with severe stomach complaints, and the three sisters, with personal problems, feud through it all. Somewhere in this mix there's an Elvis impersonator; but the whole situation finally resolves, and Fayro citizens get a Christmas program they'll never forget, according to CAROLYN WONG, whose husband, STEVEN WONG, directs. All the original cast members return except for two.

The elegant Crighton Theatre is resplendent in her Christmas finery through the efforts of theatre manager JIM BINGHAM and others. In addition to its usual ornamentation, a local shopping center donated an assortment of outsized ornaments now incorporated into the décor.

"This is one of the few Christmas plays that actually tells the Christmas story.," Carolyn said. "The Futtrelle sisters of Fayro will remind us of the reason we celebrate."

"Christmas Belles" runs weekends Dec. 3-19 at 8 p.m. Sunday matinees are Dec. 12 & 19, all in downtown Conroe's Crighton Theatre. Tickets cost \$17, \$15 and \$12, depending on age. Call (936) 441-7469 or go online to www.stage-right.org.

Anybody looking for easy and delightful Christmas gifts might consider theater tickets to the Owen or Crighton. There is a varied season of musicals and comedies, and tickets are affordable, regardless of which venue you choose.

THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY PERFORMING ARTS SOCIETY is one of five organizations nominated for a \$25,000 grant from Entergy. Supporters may vote twice a month through December on line at <http://www.facebook.com/ThePowerToCare>. Log on to www.MCPAS.org for additional instructions.

Contact peggie at pegmillr@juno.com or (936) 448-6455 with news of entertainment and people.